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BARBARA PATRICK
SUPERVISOR, THIRD DISTRICT

Statement of Kern County Supervisor Barbara Patrick
CALFED Public Hearing, Visalia, California, September 14, 1999

I have asked this statement to be read because I have become very concerned that CALFED is not adequately addressing the crucial water supply problems that face California and Kern County. As a result, water supply problems will only get worse, and the people of California and Kern County will suffer.

Your proposed actions are weighted heavily toward ecosystem improvements while real decisions on actions to improve water supply are delayed until the future --- a future that will be characterized by water shortages because you have failed to make appropriate decisions now.

We know that California is already critically short of adequate supplies of water in drought years. Only a series of wet years, during the five years CALFED has been working, have prevented serious damage to California's economy. Your plan creates no improvement in storage or water quality, and a repeat of a seven year drought period would result in massive water shortages.

CALFED needs to specifically identify storage projects that will be implemented, and the population levels at which they will be implemented. Linking water storage projects to unproven targets for water conservation risks catastrophe. If people in Kern County are unable to meet conservation targets, will they simply be deprived of water? If an industry can't meet the targets, will they simply be shut down and their workers placed on welfare. If our farms can't meet your targets, will they simply revert to wasteland and the food they produce reduced to a vague memory in a hungry world?

It is appropriate to encourage water conservation. It is neither appropriate, nor moral, to hold the jobs, homes and health of California hostage to your untested goals.

CALFED's many staff and consultants have been studying these problems for five years and have only reached real decisions on ecosystem improvements. As a representative of the people of Kern County, I insist that you make specific commitments to water supply improvements based on clear requirements, or future generations will see the promise of "getting better together" as nothing more than a shallow political slogan.